

**A**

**L E T T E R**

**FROM A**

**FATHER to his DAUGHTER.**

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L E T T E R

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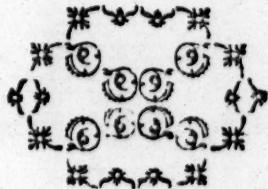
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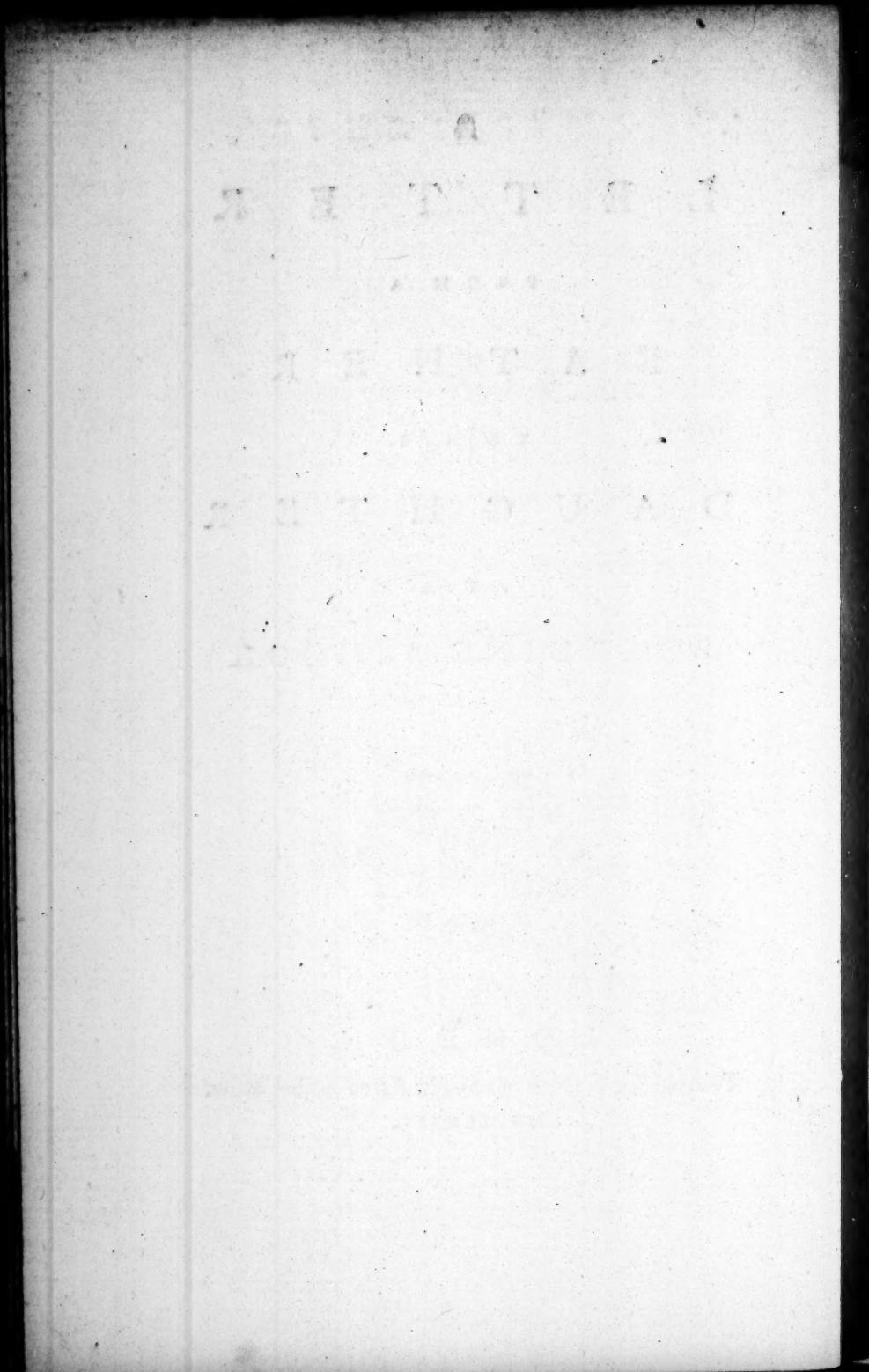
D A U G H T E R

A T A

BOARDING-SCHOOL.



L O N D O N,  
Printed for G. ROBINSON, in Pater-noster-Row.  
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## ADVERTISEMENT.

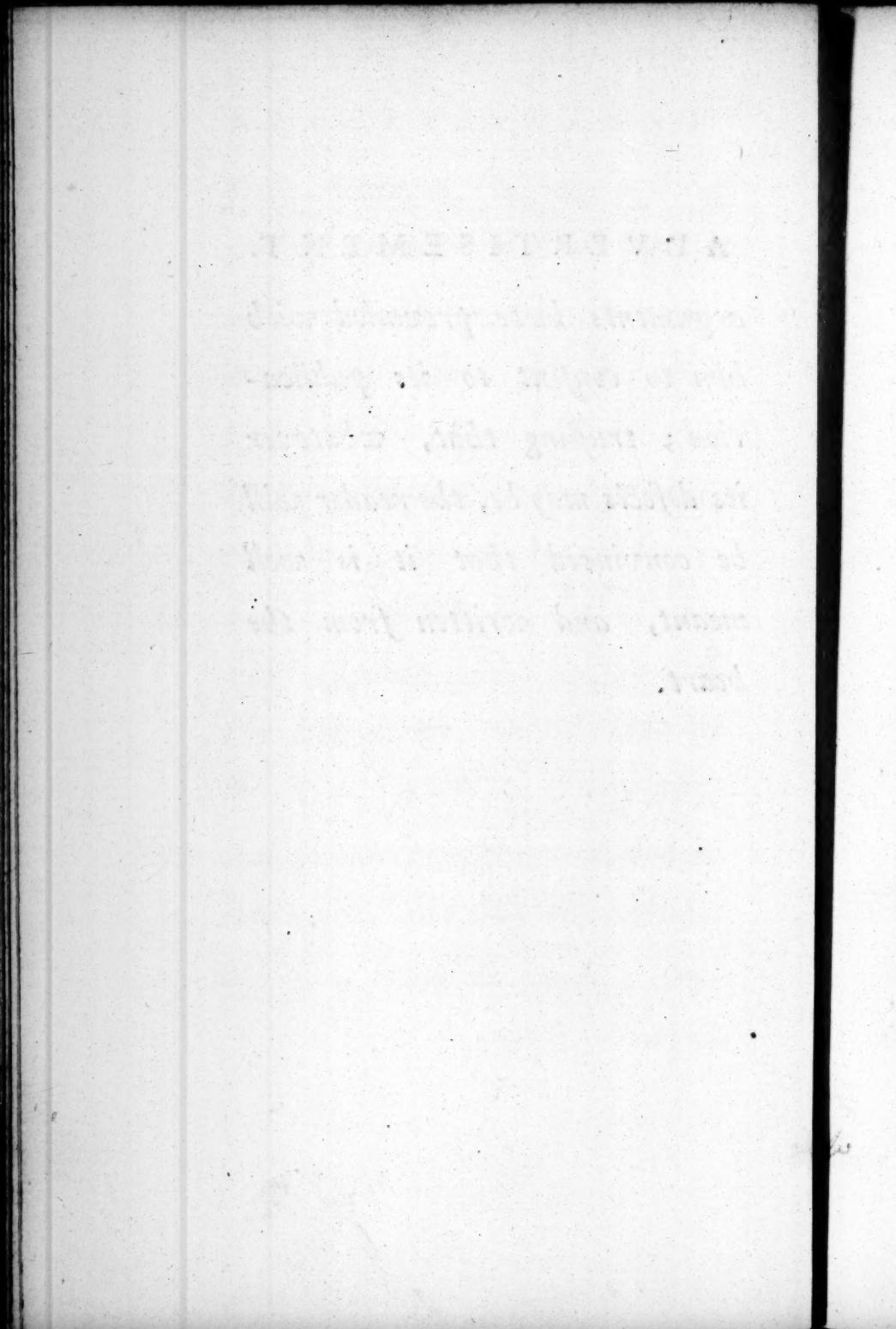
THE following small performance is really what the title page declares it to be. It was written, about seven or eight years ago, in separate letters from the author to one of his daughters at a boarding-school. Her mother desiring to have these methodized, and properly

## ADVERTISEMENT.

perly arranged, for the use of the rest of their children, sons as well as daughters, they were accordingly thrown together into their present form. Since that time several of the author's friends, on whose judgment he could rely, and particularly some of his female acquaintance, having seen the manuscript, urged that it should be printed; saying that they found themselves affected by reading it, and that the publishing of it would do good. These arguments

## ADVERTISEMENT.

*arguments have prevailed with him to consent to its publication ; trusting that, whatever its defects may be, the reader will be convinced that it is well meant, and written from the heart.*



A  
L E T T E R  
F R O M A  
FATHER to his DAUGHTER.

DEAR M.

IN a former letter I gave you reason to expect that you might soon hear from me again, and perhaps at greater length. My writing at present, however, does not proceed from my having any apprehensions, that you will be deficient in giving all necessary attention to every part of your behaviour, and to the several things in which you are

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engaged. But now that you are at a distance, and as writing is the only way left me of conversing with you, I think it my duty, by a letter now and then, to suggest to you some things I wish you to be early informed of, that they may make a more lasting impression, and be the sooner of use to you. One at your age, unexperienced, and unsuspicuous, stands greatly in need of direction. The paths of life are intricate and dangerous; and, to carry us safely through them, great circumspection is required. Happy they, who betimes have been determined into the right road! As the foundation of good or bad habits is commonly laid in youth, no pains should

should be spared, at this period, to give the mind a proper turn, and to point out the course that ought to be pursued. A timely hint has preserved many from grievous mistakes; while others, from the want of it, have been brought into circumstances very troublesome and perplexing.

The first thing to be inculcated upon young persons is that they be of a tractable disposition, and lay themselves open to instruction. For a great while to come you can trust but little to your own understanding, and therefore must suffer yourself to be directed by those on whose judgment and friendship you

can safely rely. Whenever you are at a loss, be sure to have recourse to them: nay, it would be right never to attempt any thing without first consulting them. Young people are apt to be conceited, and to think they know enough; which is a great misfortune, because it renders them positive, tenacious, and unadvisable. A diffident, advisable temper, on the contrary, is the true foundation of every worthy accomplishment, as it disposes one to hearken to reason, and good counsel, and to act accordingly. Be always ready to give up your opinion to those of greater knowledge and experience than yourself, even when you may think you are in the right:

right : you will daily grow wiser by so doing.

Whatever you undertake in the course of your education, strive to excel in it. This is both for your profit and your reputation. To learn things by halves is learning to little purpose ; and those who do not make due progress in what they are taught with all advantages, affront their teachers, disappoint their parents, and, to their own shame, are suspected of idleness, or want of capacity ; an imputation which, I dare say, you would wish to avoid. It is not supposed, that during your stay at a boarding-school you can be perfect in every thing, if in any

thing : but by attention, and application, you will acquire such a knowledge, habit, and manner of doing things, as will enable you, by your own industry afterwards, to accomplish what your teachers could not do, by reason of the short time you were under their care.

That you may not create uneasiness to yourself, or to others, I recommend to you an exact and cheerful compliance with the rules of your house ; by the observance of which you will be early inured to subjection and regularity. Some of them, I know, have been reckoned hardships, such as confinement, and a stricter diet than very indul-

indulgent parents will approve of. These, however, I consider as necessary in the œconomy of a boarding-school; and a prudent governess will always regulate them consistently with decency, and the health of her boarders.

A habit of confinement, in the beginning of life, is the best mean of curing young people of that rambling, gadding disposition, which is so natural to them. It may be irksome, indeed, at first, but custom makes it easy: and, by degrees, they learn to keep at home from inclination, as well as to enjoy themselves in solitude; the good effects of which are often ex-

perienced through the whole of life.

A moderate and plain diet not only contributes to health, but is especially necessary under confinement, and accustoms young people to a due government of their appetite ; which, when gratified in all its cravings, renders many of them very troublesome to themselves, and to every body about them. Pampering and full meals, variety and dainties, inflame the passions, stimulate the appetite too much, or, perhaps, destroy it ; and lay the foundation of diseases that may shorten life, or make it a burden. A habit of eating or drinking more than

than the necessities of nature require, and a passion for delicate eating, as it is called, do not at all correspond with the idea we have of female delicacy ; which forbids all indulgences of this kind, as an indecency, and no way consistent with those restraints the sex ought willingly to lay upon themselves. A glutton, and an epicure, are equally odious.

Confinement, and temperate meals, are so far from being hardships, in your present situation, that it would be happy for many were they to be kept under the same discipline for a great while after they leave a boarding-school ; till  
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their own experience has convinced them of its advantages. This is the more necessary, as now a spirit of dissipation prevails every where; and every fashionable table is spread with all the incentives to luxurious gratification.

The bare mention of subjection, a little above, possibly would startle you. It is an unpleasant word, I own, and sounds ill to one who does not understand its meaning in this place, or has not been used to obey. But subjection is an essential part of education: without it nothing can be done; neither precept nor example will have any influence.

fluence. If you do not, in youth, learn obedience to others, who certainly best know what is fit for you, you never will be able to govern yourself; and self-government is the highest attainment of our nature: he that conquers himself is greater than he that conquers the whole world. Nor must it be imputed to severity, or the want of natural affection, that parents sometimes cross their children's inclinations, by absolutely refusing, or delaying to grant, what they are set upon. By this they mean to teach them patience and submission, as well as to bear disappointments and mortifications, which are unavoidable in life. When young people

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are never thwarted, but are indulged in all their humours and fancies, they grow haughty and headstrong; will have what they please, and do what they please; and commonly prove very disagreeable to all who may ever have to do with them. Many parents have been severely punished for their indulgence, in the disobedience and ungovernable temper of their children, to whose faults they were blind. Believe me, they are your best friends who take the trouble to shew you what you ought to do, and what you ought not to do; who plainly tell you your faults, that you may amend them.

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I would farther advise you not to enter into party quarrels. Where there is a number of young people together, little jealousies and disputes will arise, and offences will be given. Every body is, somehow or other, drawn in to take a side; each side grows keen, and the parties, by degrees, contract particular likings and aversions to one another. This humour is carried from the boarding-school, and encreased by their intercourse with the world; where it daily discovers itself by a disposition to argue, and a readiness to take part in every affair that comes to be a matter of public discussion, and in which every one, however unfit she may be,

be, assumes a right to judge. How often have we seen towns, cities, a great part of a country, nay the whole nation, divided about matters in which not one in ten thousand had any concern; yet all seemed to be as deeply engaged, as if their own safety or interest had been at stake! I have often wondered to see the women the keenest in such disputes; which, to me, appeared very unbecoming. Let a woman, when she is called to it, maintain her opinion, or dissent from others, in decent terms, and without entering into an argument so far as to alter her temper, or discompose her features. She should avoid all conversation that may deprive her of

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that softness and composure which are so agreeable in the fair sex, and ought to accompany all their speeches and behaviour. A woman ruffled with passion makes a disagreeable appearance; indeed she is not herself.

That you may be restrained from engaging in these silly contests, always ask yourself——what concern have I in the affair? If you have none, be silent; if you have any, tell your mind calmly; and, as far as they will bear it, put a favourable construction upon the actions and opinions of others. In any case be ready, on all proper occasions, to vindicate truth, and

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to support those who are borne down by unjust obloquy. Should conversation turn warm, endeavour to change the subject. By these means you will gain a character for prudence, friendship, and honesty.

When I advise you not to enter into party quarrels, I would, at the same time, entreat you to avoid all plotting and collusion, in order to carry on any little purpose in a clandestine manner; a practice too frequent in schools, and often attended with bad consequences. The smallest appearance of this should be severely checked, and every thing that may give occasion to it removed; because it teaches young people

people to be cunning and artful, to dissemble and equivocate; and commonly ends in downright lying; which, if not timely prevented, may grow into a habit. Now, that you may be preserved from falling into such a hateful practice, never allow yourself to do any thing you dare not freely own, or may have cause afterwards to repent and be ashamed of. Sincerity is the greatest ornament of our nature; for, without truth, what are all the talents, all the accomplishments, one may be possessed of? Nothing can compensate the want of it.

Begin early to store your mind with knowledge, both for self-en-

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tertainment, and for use. Next to the plain precepts of morality, the knowledge of ourselves, and of mankind, is that from which we must form a true system of rules for our conduct in life. We acquire knowledge best by observation and reflection. Reading, no doubt, is a good mean of acquiring it ; but living examples, and daily occurrences, are more striking, and make the most lasting impression. Look round you, and carefully observe what is amiss, or what is commendable in others ; and draw a lesson of instruction from their good or bad conduct. This is a sure way of gaining knowledge and experience, and without any trouble.

Observe,

Observe, particularly among those with whom you now converse, what it is that renders one agreeable, and another disagreeable. One becomes agreeable, and obtains a good name, by being modest, gentle, affable, prudent, diligent, peaceable, friendly, obliging, sincere. Strive to imitate such a one in these, and the like amiable qualities. But another is perhaps as disagreeable, because she is peevish and perverse, pert and forward, a tattler, false, proud, censorious, spiteful, and contentious; of a plotting mischievous disposition, and given to cunning and dissimulation, to slander and backbiting: these are the disgrace of our nature, and the

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plague of our lives ; and I hope you will always have them in abhorrence.

Knowledge is the food of the mind ; but frequently serves only to gratify our curiosity, or to raise our vanity : reflexion digests it, and makes it of real use to us. One may know a great deal, and yet understand very little. Accustom yourself, therefore, to think, and to think justly, of what you read, or hear, or see, so as to apply it wisely to the purpose of your own improvement. But, in a special manner, you ought to know well your own heart, in order to correct any wrong bias, and to cherish any good

good disposition that may be there. Self-knowledge is, of all other, the most important to ourselves ; and in our own minds we may read the tempers and characters of all mankind.

To the little care that has been taken to cultivate the mind of the fair sex, is attributed their having so much a turn to dress and diversions; their trifling way of spending time, and as trifling conversation. Many of them, alas ! having no fund at home, must seek for something out of themselves, to supply the woeful vacancy of thought they feel within. But, by due culture,

a taste might be excited for mental pleasures, which would dispose them to a proper employment of time, and render their conversation instructive and entertaining. As their sentiments are naturally delicate and refined, their company, in general, is more engaging than that of the men, which should be no small inducement, one would think, to improve their thinking powers. But the head and the heart seem, at present, to be only subordinate considerations, if at all attended to: and what a poor figure does a woman make, even with all outward advantages, if good-nature, and good-sense be wanting?

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In conversation I wish you to be distinguished for sense, and a true knowledge of necessary things, rather than for a nice acquaintance with the idle fashions, and other littlenesses that seem wholly to engross the time and talk of a great number of females; a misfortune which frequently pursues them for life. A girl has learned very little, whose chief accomplishment, after much time and pains spent in her education, is the knowledge of those matters that relate merely to the adorning of her own person.

That the mind may not be occupied by little things, always propose to yourself something truly

laudable to do, that may constantly engage your attention, and keep you profitably employed. When you have more time than at present, allot certain hours every day to reading, writing, translating, and transcribing, from the best authors, such passages as please, or affect you most; classing them under distinct heads, both for the sake of method, and to assist your memory. It would be of use likewise to keep a journal of daily occurrences, with your own observations, or the observations of others, upon them. And many things will occur in conversation, not unworthy of a place in your diary; such as a judicious remark, a remarkable fact, a curious

curious anecdote, a useful hint, a genteel compliment, or a bon mot. But beware of wit and wanton humour, which are dangerous things, and may bring you into trouble. Such a method, pursued for some time, would give you a habit of attention, and teach you to distinguish readily, as well as to select and arrange your materials; which might be of advantage to you in many respects. However, till you grow expert in this sort of exercise, you must take the assistance of some person of taste and judgment, to shew you what should be rejected, and what retained; that nothing which is trifling may be allowed a place in your collection. This surely would

would be a more profitable way of employing time, than being almost wholly taken up about matters in which you may be excelled by very low people. How many, for instance, perform all the feats of the needle in perfection, who have little else to recommend them? And how many dance to admiration, but otherwise are of no consequence? These are mechanical things, in which the head has the smallest share; and at a certain time of life, we lose the inclination and capacity for them.

Do not mistake me, as if I imagined that you should be indifferent about, or might dispense with, any of those genteel accomplishments  
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that are suitable to your age, sex, and station. On the contrary, I think them highly necessary and becoming; nor must you suffer yourself to be outdone in them. I only mean that you should consider what it is that chiefly deserves your attention, and bestow the greatest care upon that. People of superior birth, fortune, or education, ought to maintain their superiority by their intellectual acquirements; in which they are not likely to be surpassed, or even equalled, by those in lower stations, who have no probability of improving themselves. When a stock of useful knowledge is not laid up in youth, life is very insipid, and old age in-

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supportable: but to those possessed of it, it is a perpetual fund of pleasure and satisfaction, through every period, and in every circumstance of life.

Here I would recommend to you the reading of short and plain treatises of rational and practical divinity, well chosen books of devotion, and such as relate to morals, human prudence, and good breeding; select pieces of poetry likewise; and to be familiarly acquainted with the sayings of good and wise men. Of these Solomon has given the best collection, and the best adapted to common life. The book of Ecclesiasticus, in the

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Apocrypha, contains also many excellent things.

Now that you are about to enter into life, it is of great importance to know what life is, or how to live, in order to be happy. The generality of mankind, not considering what is the true end of their being, place their happiness in high rank, fortune, fashionable observances, the pleasures of life, and other external things. But all these are uncertain, and frequently prove the source of our greatest unhappiness. Rational, solid, and permanent happiness, lies in a steady performance of our duty, as it respects God, our neighbour, and ourselves.

Our

Our duty to God consists in an habitual reverence of him, a humble dependence upon him, an earnest desire to know his will, and a constant endeavour to do it, in obedience to his command, from a sincere love, and a sense of our obligations to him. In these are included piety and devotion, a conscientious regard to his institutions, gratitude for all his benefits, and a full acquiescence in the determinations of his providence.

Our duty to man consists in universal benevolence, integrity, or the love of truth, justice, compassion, forgiveness, forbearance, meekness, condescension, and the like. The plainest,

plainest and most comprehensive rule here is, to do as we would be done by; which, as it is binding on all mankind, is made obvious to the meanest capacity.

Our duty to ourselves consists in temperance, or the right government of our passions and desires; patience, fortitude, contentment, the bearing of injuries, a due concern for the preservation of health and life, and diligence in our several callings and occupations. Another part of our duty, respecting ourselves, is self-reverence; that is, a constant care never to do any thing, even in private, unbecoming our station, our character, or the dignity

dignity of our nature. By this is meant decorum, or decency at all times, in dress, conversation, and behaviour : and we may add a right choice of company ; for, according to the company we keep, so will our manners be. A virtuous pride, as it may be justly styled, or a due respect for ourselves, is often a happy mean of preserving us from doing any thing that is unworthy or improper, and that may lessen us in the opinion of others.

All this, which is but a short summary of duty, is what we call religion ; and as there is no space in which there is not some duty to be performed, religion, you see, must

must be the great, the constant business of our lives. Many advantages accrue from it. Religion gives peace and serenity to the mind ; and keeps it always regular, attentive, and prepared for every duty. It is a sure resource under all the troubles, distresses, and disappointments of life ; and our only support at that solemn period when all human aids forsake us. By the habitual practice of it we make daily advances towards the perfection of our nature in virtue ; and recommend ourselves to the favour of that all-perfect Being, who delights in the happiness of his creatures, and their conformity to him. In short, religion makes God our friend, which

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is a consideration of unspeakable joy and comfort. And it is not a dull, melancholly, disgusting thing, as some would represent it; or, as in too many, who mistake its real nature, it appears to be. On the contrary, he who is actuated by this principle has the best reason to be constantly chearful, and satisfied from himself; being always conscious that he honestly endeavours to do his duty, and to please his Maker. Religion imposes no hardships upon us, nothing that is burdensome, or inconsistent with that liberty and enjoyment of ourselves, which is suited to our rational nature. For it does not deny us any of the innocent pleasures of life;

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but only regulates them, and restrains us from such as are hurtful, either in themselves, or in their consequences; and thus every way provides for our happiness.

Would you then live to the true purposes of life, as a reasonable and accountable creature, and so as to be happy, both here and hereafter; in one word—be religious. Let me advise you, however, never to make an ostentatious shew of being so. High pretences of this kind favour too much of pride or hypocrisy; and nothing exposes a person more to censure and suspicion. On the other hand, be not ashamed to own your belief of

religious truths : but remember, at the same time, that a proper deportment, not a noisy profession, is the true evidence that you live under the influence of them.

When I spoke above of our duty to God, I mentioned, among other things, a conscientious regard to his institutions. These are his worship, the preaching of his word, the sacraments, and the observation of the sabbath. With respect to this last I would say a few things, because a great deal depends upon it.

Man is a thinking creature, and, as such, it is natural for him to enquire

quire what, and whence he is ; for what end he was placed here ; what is required of him ; what he is capable of ; and what his state hereafter may be. Considerations of this kind well become him as a reasonable being ; but the cares and allurements of the world, by drawing off the attention, do not suffer them to operate, with due efficacy, upon the generality of mankind. Now, a portion of time devoted, at certain periods, to retirement, and sober converse with one's self, is a notable expedient to make us acquainted with ourselves, and to habituate us to reflection ; the benefit of which would not be confined to any particular time, place, or affair.

A habit of reflection would accompany us through all the business of life, and, on every occasion, direct our thoughts to their proper objects. Of what advantage this would be in the general conduct of life, and particularly in promoting our secular concerns, is easily conceived. On this account, therefore, though nothing else were intended by it, the sabbath is certainly a wise institution : it disposes one to think : most of the evils that befall us are owing to the want of consideration.

But the sabbath, considered in a religious view, and as a divine appointment, is an institution of a much

much higher intendment. By means thereof a sense of the Deity is kept up in the world ; and stated opportunities are afforded us of publicly professing our belief of his being and perfections ; and of vowing obedience to him, as our sovereign, who, in all respects, has a right to it. To inform us of our duty, the preaching of God's word is wisely appointed ; and you ought diligently to attend upon it. It is no excuse for the neglect of such an useful institution to say that the preacher does not always please you ; or that you can be more profited, or better entertained, by reading at home. It must be a bad sermon, indeed, from which no instruction can be

drawn. The difference of sermons often lies more in the language, and the manner of delivery, than in the matter of them; for that is much the same in them all; and we cannot always expect to hear some new thing. The same sermon, delivered by different preachers, will have a very different effect upon the same hearers. A cold, a loose, an affected discourse from the pulpit, to be sure, can neither please nor profit any body: a plain, sensible, methodical one, though it may not be set off with all the graces of style and action, cannot fail to be useful and acceptable, except to those whose taste and ears are too nice to be pleased with ordinary things. But

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ordinary things are best suited to common audiences; for, if a sermon be not made level to the capacity of the audience, of what use is it? Besides, it is necessary, from time to time, to inculcate the most obvious truths, in order to preserve the remembrance of what we already know; which otherwise might slide out of our minds. Though you should not receive any new information from the generality of sermons, yet, if the body of the people be instructed and edified thereby, you ought to rejoice; else you are not a friend of mankind; and, regardless of the good of others, go to church just to gratify a present humour, or because it is the fashion;

shion ; in which case you will neither be wiser nor better for going there. If you are honest in this matter, you will be influenced by other, and very different motives ; even the love of God, and the love of man ; which ought to be the ruling principles in the heart of every one.

The hearing of a sermon, however, is not the main end of our going to church. Prayer and praise, confession and thanksgiving, should chiefly engage our attention ; because in these we directly address the Deity ourselves ; and, if truly devout, have intercourse with him ; such intercourse as can be supposed

posed to take place in the present state.

Communication with the Deity has been strangely perplexed by some, and misrepresented, or totally denied, by others. Though, from all the evidence of which it is capable, the thing appears to be abundantly clear ; yet, I am sensible that, without some explanation, you will be at a loss to know what it means, and wherein it consists. On our part it is no other than the proper exercise of those affections which necessarily result from a serious contemplation of the divine Being, as possessed of all possible perfections ; on whom we entirely depend ;

depend; to whom we are infinitely obliged; and to resemble whom should be our most earnest wish and endeavour. According to the different views we have of him, in these respects, love, reverence, gratitude, hope, joy, desire, and confidence in him, alternately fill the mind, compose it, and according to circumstances and occasions, often elevate it to a lively pitch of devotion. Every person of sentiment and sensibility will comprehend this; and every good man has felt it. On the other hand, if we believe that God, who is perfect goodness, attends to the necessities of his creatures, we must believe also that, agreeably to his nature, he is ready to

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communicate to them the good which they stand in need of, and which with humility they ask of him.

But what I have just now said, perhaps, may be illustrated in a way more familiar to you, and more adapted to your understanding. Suppose some person should deliver you from great distress, or save your life when in imminent danger ; suppose he should raise you from indigence to a prosperous condition ; suppose him to interest himself, with all the warmth of friendship, in your affairs ; and, moreover, to assure you of his constant care and protection : would not you love this

this person ; would not your heart glow with gratitude to him ; would not you make him continually the object of your attention ; imitate his virtues ; trust him with your most important concerns ; and rejoice in having such a generous friend and protector ? You certainly would : nothing could excuse your folly and ingratitude if you did not. But God has done infinitely more for you than all the world can do. To him you are indebted for every thing you have ; from him you must receive every thing you hope for ; to him, therefore, the most grateful and devout acknowledgements are due. Now, in your acts of devotion, it is only the same good

good affections which you would exercise towards an earthly benefactor that must be directed to him who is the great benefactor of mankind; but with a fervour and veneration in some degree proportioned to the excellence of his nature, and to the number, as well as the greatness, of his benefits. And, when you devoutly worship him, in the firm persuasion that he is both able and willing to grant your requests, you may, upon good grounds, hope for the communications of his favour. This, however, he dispenses not always according to our desires and expectations; but at what time, and in what manner, and measure he  
pleaseth;

pleaseth ; and it becomes not finite dependent creatures to prescribe to infinite wisdom, which does all for our good. The belief of a God, and of a particular providence, makes all this easy to be understood.

Thus far we carry reason along with us in our devotional exercises, and know what we are about. Beyond this all is dark and inexplicable ; and we are in great danger of deceiving ourselves ; because we can have no distinct conceptions of what we are doing. Of these things, therefore, study to have right apprehensions ; that, in all your addresses to the Deity, you may act with understanding ; and

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perform a rational and an acceptable service to him. By this means you will be preserved from delusion in a matter of so great moment ; and, at the same time, perceive what a wide distinction there is between the calm extasy of true manly devotion, and the wild transports of enthusiastic rapture. The former supposeth a clear head, and a feeling heart ; the latter is altogether the effect of a bodily constitution, of a weak mind, or a heated imagination ; which, by many, has been mistaken for an extraordinary communication, or a supernatural impulse. As young minds are very susceptible of impressions, they ought to be well informed as to this matter ; lest they

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should be misled by the illusions of fancy, or by the reading of certain books, whose authors, though very honest, and very pious, seem to have written more to the passions, than to the cool reason and judgment of mankind.

To give you all the information I can on this head, I would observe, farther, that, by living up to the dignity of our nature, and the design of our creation, in a constant practice of virtue, we are very properly said to maintain a daily communication with the Deity. We communicate with him likewise when, with proper dispositions, we survey his works, in their num-

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ber, immensity, variety, connexion, regularity, and uses; so as by them to be led up to the first cause. A careful attention to the methods of his providence too is another way in which we communicate with him, and have evidences of his friendly interpositions on our behalf; which, on many occasions, even sceptics themselves have been forced to acknowledge. And, when we heartily endeavour to forward the purposes of his providence in the moral government of the world, and, by acts of beneficence, to do all the good in our power, we co-operate with him in his kind intentions towards mankind, in order

to promote their happiness both in this world, and another.

These hints, it is hoped, will, in some measure, serve to direct you in your devotions ; and also to shew you that the intercourse I have been speaking of is neither such a mysterious, nor such an imaginary thing, as some people are disposed to make it. The doctrine is not new, or singular. The very Heathens entertained a belief that there was a communication between the gods and the souls of good men. Should any think fit to call this a dream, they must allow that, at least, it was a pleasant dream : but there is more in it ; which every one

one may be satisfied of, who will coolly examine into the state of his own mind, so as to know its true bent, and what are its natural wishes. It shews that there is a principle in man, or a particular sense, if it may be so called, exciting in him strong desires after a superior nature, and a nearer connection with that pure Spirit, who is the chief good, the fountain of his happiness, and perfection itself. This consideration suggests a great many things, no less edifying to a serious, than entertaining to a philosophic mind; but they cannot have a place here. It is sufficient to observe, that intercourse with the Deity, in a future state, though,

in some respects, it may be the same with what we now enjoy in an imperfect manner, will yet be attended with very different circumstances. It will no longer suffer any disturbance or interruption from the objects of sense, the infirmities of our bodies, or the irregularities of our minds.—For our faculties, which now are so limited, obscured, and encumbered with matter, will then be refined, enlarged, and freed from every impediment to a vigorous exertion of them.—Of consequence, we shall be able fully to comprehend the Deity, not only as he is in himself, but as he appears in the various displays of his perfections in his works,

works, and dispensations towards mankind, and innumerable other beings and worlds.—At the same time that the mind is delighted with the sublimest objects, it will be ever employed in exercises entirely suited to its spiritual nature.—And lastly, we shall be continually receiving tokens of the divine complacency, without any thing to diminish, or deprive us of, the unspeakable felicity arising therefrom.

If a great philosopher, among the ancients, could exult in the prospect of that happiness which he longed to enjoy in the society of departed sages, and beloved friends,

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how much greater cause of exultation have we, who are favoured with much higher views, and have a much clearer light to direct us! Nothing surely can give such a noble elevation of mind as the expectation of, one day, mixing with superior beings, and spirits made perfect. If, farther, such be the happiness to which religion infallibly leads us, are not they unreasonable who shew themselves unfriendly to it; are not they unfriendly to themselves who neglect or despise it? They must be possessed of no true ambition arising from a sense of their own dignity; as creatures endued with reason, and a portion of the Divinity itself.

What

What is religion but philosophy refined, or a grand scheme of intellectual and moral improvement; by which our rational nature, now so much under the influence of our passions, is, at length, freed from subjection, and rendered capable of high attainments? Who then would not strive to be as perfect as possible, even supposing our views confined to this state of existence? If knowledge and virtue constitute the perfection of our nature, the more we advance in these the more pleasure, at least, shall we enjoy as intelligent beings in this world; the more shall we be able to act a worthy part, as men and good citizens; which would be equally our honour,

honour, our interest, and our happiness. Every person of real wisdom and knowledge, who cannot but be sensible of his imperfections, will, from a regard to himself, endeavour to be as much a man as he can; and few, I presume, will pretend to say that they are either good enough, or wise enough. But the highest degree of happiness we can possibly attain to here, being no way commensurate to the hopes and desires of the human mind, falls infinitely short of what we shall be possessed of hereafter. It is only perfection in virtue that can render us completely happy in every period of our existence.

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With regard to the public exercises of religion, I shall add, that to join frequently with numbers of our fellow-creatures in acts of worship, is an excellent mean of exciting and maintaining in our minds a spirit of true benevolence. This disposition you ought carefully to cultivate: for, except in certain circumstances, merely accidental, all mankind are upon a level, depend upon one another, and therefore are bound sincerely to love one another.

But however regular you may be in your attendance at church, and bearing a share in the public devotions, if the greatest part of the

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sabbath be spent in vain mirth, in feasting, in idle amusements, promiscuous company, or parties of pleasure, you do not observe it suitably to the design of the day: nay, you act inconsistently with it, and lose all the improvement that might be derived from sedate thinking, when retired from the noise and hurry of the world. The more assiduous you are in performing the duties of the Lord's day, the more you will be disposed to the performance of your duty at all other times. And, that you may enjoy every day with satisfaction, consider the sabbath as set apart for recollection, and the forming of good purposes, and employ it accordingly.

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It is a certain observation that the state of morals has always been according to the observance, or non-observance of Sunday. It must be a matter of the greatest importance, then, to fix in the minds of men the strongest impressions of the Deity, and of the duty they owe him; to which the institution of the sabbath mainly conduceth: no other way can the welfare of society be secured. Without religion, this world would be a perpetual scene of violence and disorder. Would we wish to see, every where, better parents, more dutiful children, more faithful servants, and the people more honest, sober, and industrious, those especially of superiour stations

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ought, in good policy, to set them an example, particularly by shewing a punctual regard to sacred institutions: if they do not, others may be induced to think that religion is only a contrivance to overawe the multitude; a supposition which, at once, excludes the virtuous principle, and destroys all sense of moral obligation. They complain, with a very bad grace, of the want of truth, public virtue, and good order among us, who discover, by their own practice, an habitual contempt of the most effectual means of promoting these. We are all members of the great community of mankind, and enjoy the common privileges of society;

society ; and therefore are bound to the performance of every social duty, that may contribute either to the happiness of individuals, or the prosperity of the whole.

While I am endeavouring to shew you the necessity of a stated day of rest and devotion, and that it ought to be observed with the greatest decency at least, you do not imagine, I hope, that I am pleased with a demure face, a solemn gait, or downcast eyes on Sunday : I assure you I am not. These outward appearances of sanctity are by no means certain marks of inward grace ; nor do they serve the purposes of religion. On the contrary,

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they greatly mar the comely features of devotion; open the mouths of scoffers; and render such as are not the friends of religion more averse from it. Sunday was meant to be a day of gladness; and undoubtedly is so to all who understand its true intention, so as to be duly affected therewith; and, when the heart is glad, it will naturally express its joy by the chearfulness of the countenance.

But some are so gloomy that they will hardly allow a chearful spirit to be consistent with the service of their Maker. To be sad, and dejected, they think, best becomes their condition, as offending creatures;

tures ; which gives a melancholy cast to every thing about them. People of this temper, surely, have no amiable conceptions of the supreme Being, the merciful father of mankind ; they distrust his goodness ; they serve him out of fear, not from a principle of love ; and seem to have forgoten that, notwithstanding our manifold imperfections, we are bid to rejoice always.

In one of your letters you observed that you always went to the church, and that none of the boarders were allowed to go to the chapel. This I very much approve of ; as it is fit your governess should have her young people under her

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eye on Sundays as well as at other times; nor do I chuse that you should appear singular. But whatever society of worshiping people you may, either stately, or occasionally join with, be sincere.

The lamentable divisions among Christians have done infinite mischief in the world: and what are they divided about? Not about the essentials of religion, for all Christians are agreed as to these; but about circumstanstials, or the externals of religion; such as the constitution of churches, modes of worship, rites and ceremonies, and some peculiar tenets that distinguish particular sects;

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concerning which good and wise men have, at all times, thought, and always will think, very differently ; because these things are arbitrary, and depend upon the will of man. Religion, properly speaking, is a personal, internal, indispensible thing ; unalterable in its nature ; and enjoined by the special appointment of heaven ; and therefore is not subject to human controul. As to those things accidentally connected with it, for the sake of decency and convenience, every one has a right to determine according to the light of his own conscience ; and every church will chuse what it thinks best.

Seeing this is the case, can it do honour to the Deity to imagine that he will condemn his creatures for unavoidable errors, mere prejudices of education; and because we do not all think the same way with regard to things indifferent? No surely; his judgement is more equitable. He will judge us according to the purity of our intentions, and the uprightness of our lives; according to the good we do, or endeavour to do, from real goodness of heart, and in imitation of him who is the fountain of all goodness, good even to the unthankful and to the evil.

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How foolish and presumptuous, then, are blind mortals, who would measure the Almighty by themselves, and think that he will deal with mankind according to their peevish, partial, and perverse humours; nay, who, from the bitterness they express against all that differ from them in persuasion, seem to wish that he would! Whatever they may pretend, this want of charity destroys the only sure mark of their being religious. How many, at least, have been known to make a mighty noise about their church, and to condemn all others, who, if we judge from their characters and behaviour, could do but little honour to any church!

Bigotry, and a damning spirit, are quite opposite to the temper of christianity, and a scandal to its professors. I say a scandal; for is it not an indelible reproach that those who profess a religion founded in love, should so cruelly harass and destroy one another for things of no moment? Every church has persecuted more or less, and been persecuted in its turn. Happily for mankind, this spirit is now pretty much banished from the world.

One of a true catholic spirit has an enlarged heart, that takes in the whole rational creation, and embraces all mankind in one common bond

bond of love; making no distinction but between a good man, and a bad man. Knowing well that truth is not confined to a party, with him none are reputed schismatics, or heretics, but such as deny the Deity, or disbelieve what he has revealed, or withdraw themselves from his worship. It does not enter into his mind that an exclusive right to salvation is enjoyed by any church; because he believes it attainable by the faithful of all churches. No less is he persuaded that God, who is every where present, and loveth good men in all places, may be acceptably served any where. He therefore esteems no place unhallowed where the

great parent of mankind is unfeignedly worshiped; and thinks not the worse of others though they do not worship him in the very same manner that he does. However he may differ in opinion from fellow-men, still regarding them as brethren, he pities their errors, but desires not to punish them; and heartily endeavours to promote their present, as well as their future happiness.

It is good, in all cases, to think soberly, but especially in religious matters; because our zeal here is apt to be intemperate. Your sex very often err in this point; and therefore ought never to indulge a

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zealous concern for institutions merely human; lest they should come, at length, to substitute them in the place of religion itself, and make them of equal importance with it. Hence the rigid attachment of many to forms and usages, and other ordinances of man; not aware that blind zeal begets keenness, hatred, and an uncharitable disposition; which, in a bigotted mind, may encrease into fierceness and cruelty. But how opposite are all these to that mildness and forbearance which ought invariably to possess a female breast!

In order to encourage a moderate temper, consider that there  
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is no such thing as a perfect church in this world ; that, while men are men, an uniformity in opinion is impossible ; that there are valuable persons, persons of great understanding and integrity, of every Christian denomination ; and that, as to the matter in hand, you yourself may be wrong ; for one time or other all of us are wrong in some things. Besides, is it not repugnant to common sense, as well as to good manners, to judge harshly of others, and reprobate whole societies, nay whole states and kingdoms, on account of some trifling differences merely about the adjuncts, as they are called, of religion ; seeing, in these,

these, they have as good a title to differ from you, as you have to differ from them; and perhaps an equal chance of being in the right? And pray what is it that makes some people of one persuasion, and some of another? Mere accident, just their having been born and bred in the communion of this or the other church; for very few are of any persuasion from deliberate choice only. For my own part, I think myself very safe where I am; though I could wish to see a reformation in some things; and what church does not stand in need of it? When we indulge ourselves in hot and uncharitable disputes, about doubtful and unessential points.

points, we are no better than children fighting in great wrath for toys and trifles.

While too many are contending about words, and ways of thinking, do you adhere firmly to what is essential; and never dispute concerning mere opinions, far less condemn any for their opinions, except when they are hurtful to the interests of virtue, or to the peace and order of society. Some are pleased with simplicity of worship, as most suitable to the spirituality thereof; others are fond of pomp and ceremony, because they sooth the mind, and command attention. Allow every one to judge for himself in these

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matters: they are only circumstances that do not make a man either better or worse. But, at the same time that the greatest outward decency is observed, be chiefly concerned about the homage of the heart; which is principally required, and assuredly will be accepted, wherever you are, and in whatever manner you chuse to worship.

At a time when singular notions are zealously propagated it is a great matter to be well established in the belief of all necessary truths, and of the obligations arising from them; in order to be preserved from indifference in religion on the

the one hand, and enthusiasm on the other. Credulity, and a sceptical turn, are equally to be guarded against, as they lead to extremes equally dangerous. Female sceptics I have heard of, but this is a very unnatural character. Irreligion has never, in general, been imputed to the fair sex; nor indeed can it justly be. From their very frame, and for wise purposes respecting mankind, they are naturally inclined to devotion, and commonly are pretty warm in it. But, for this reason, they should take good heed that it be always well directed; because, at some periods, when influenced by certain opinions, they have carried it to a length that, instead

stead of promoting, hath done real hurt to religion, and to themselves, both in body, and in mind.

That you may not be led away by flaming pretences, and appearances of this kind, endeavour carefully to distinguish between what is religion, and what is not religion, that you may be able, the more readily, to discern what it requires, and what it does not require. And here I would observe, that the faith of Christians has for its objects a few plain things, which are easily understood, or may be assented to, without doing violence to reason, or hazarding any thing by assenting to them. If you are fixed in

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the belief of these, and act conformably thereto, you will have a good evidence that you do your duty; and may be the less concerned about those external things on which superstitious minds lay too great a stress. You must learn your religion from the Bible, not from the vain comments of men, or the confined notions of a party. Read the Scriptures with candour and attention, and, as far as you are able, judge for yourself. Avoid, however, every thing that may lead to useless speculation and controversy, which fill the mind with doubts and perplexities; but neither mend our temper, nor better our conduct. Not that I would

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discourage a free enquiry into what is obscure, difficult, and liable to objection : but few are equal to the task. It is our happiness that whatever relates to the knowledge and practice of our duty is plain, and requires no learning, or depth of understanding, to comprehend it. A good disposition is chiefly required.

The Scriptures, or the Bible, eminently so called, not only give us the worthiest notions of the Deity, but teach us, in the clearest manner, what we are to believe, and what we are to do, in order to render us acceptable to him. A spirit of the most exalted

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piety and devotion breathes every where in them. They are a vast treasure of useful knowledge, and highly entertaining ; as they abound with just sentiments, sound reasoning, wise sayings, prudential maxims, beautiful descriptions, lively and affecting narrations, striking examples of virtue and vice, historical truths of the greatest importance, and excel, particularly, in what the learned call fine writing ; so that, in perusing them, the man of taste may have his utmost wishes gratified. They, moreover, enter deep into the heart ; and exhibit a genuine picture of human nature, both lapsed and restored. Nowhere but in the Bible is there to be found

found a perfect system of morals, and of true philosophy; that philosophy, I mean, which subdues the passions; sets bounds to every desire; and regulates our whole conduct, our thoughts as well as our words and actions; according to which, it is declared, we shall be finally judged. In short, the Scriptures are admirably suited to the various circumstances of mankind, in their present state; and have this peculiar excellence, that they open to our view a glorious prospect of futurity. Let the sacred volumes, therefore, be your daily study; the more you are acquainted with them, the more you will be in love with them.

It is evident, then, that true happiness must depend principally upon our having right notions of religion, and chearfully submiting to its laws, in every instance of duty; for which reason I have insisted the longer upon it.

Another great mean of promoting our ease, comfort, and satisfaction in life, is Prudence. This is a word of large extent; as prudence should enter into every part of our conduct. It may be considered in two different views; first, as it respects the management of our own private affairs; and then, as it respects our behaviour towards others. The former implies, 1. Forecast, or a dis-

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creet scheming of our busines. 2. Order, or method, without which all must run to confusion. 3. Diligence in executing our daily schemes. 4. Frugality in making our bargains, and putting every thing to the best use, that nothing be wasted, or misapplied. 5. Prudence requires still farther, that we should accommodate our way of living to our circumstances ; and that our expences should never exceed our income, but be considerably within it ; because he who is not gaining is certainly losing ; having nothing laid up for extraordinary and unforeseen demands. 6. That we should have as few wants as pos-

sible; for wants indulged are endless. A habit of needless expence is not easily got rid of; and the greatest affluence cannot justify it. When young people are too soon entrusted with money they put little value upon it; and readily fall into this habit of foolish spending. Small expences, upon unnecessary things, are disregarded as trifles; but in time they amount to a great sum.

But, while we are pursuing a wise scheme of frugality, we should be attentive never to with-hold any necessary expence. It is a great science to know when to spend, and when to spare; to avoid extravagance

gance on the one hand, and sordid parsimony on the other. The order of our œconomy should be first justice, or the payment of our debts; next alms-deeds, or charity; and then, according to our ability, let us do what gratitude and generosity require. But many invert this order; and, by being profuse, which they imagine is to be generous, dissipate their fortunes, and put it out of their power to be either just, generous, or charitable. These things may seem to concern you very little at present; but, some time or other, you will find them of use; and you cannot be too early acquainted with them. As household affairs fall within the province of

the women, they, more especially, should study to be nice oeconomists; and, in an age of luxury and extravagance, hints of this kind can never be unseasonable. If you manage your affairs properly, you will not only live respected, but have wherewith to do good to others; which, to a well disposed mind, must afford the greatest pleasure.

As to the second branch of prudence, our behaviour towards others, it directs us always to act so as not to offend them; but, if possible, to gain their esteem and approbation:—To act cautiously, or so as not to be misled into any thing that may be injurious to them, or

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hurtful to ourselves:—To act in every thing with propriety, or from the best reasons, with a due regard to times, places, persons, and other circumstances. By not attending to these you may fall into great blunders, and say or do very disengaging things. Without prudence, for I do not descend to particulars, we are not supposed to act from any wise motive, or to any right end; misjudging equally with respect to the means and the intention.

Under this head of behaviour it is hardly needful to inform you that civility is due to every one; and, as every one, more or less, expects it, nothing renders a person

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more generally acceptable than true complaisance, suited to the different stations, tempers, and characters, of those he has to do with. By this you will see, I do not mean that formal, fulsome, officious, undistinguishing complaisance, which some are remarkable for, who persecute us with their civilities; not knowing that good manners consist in making every body easy.

Your attention to others, however, in point of behaviour, must not be restricted to mere complaisance. There are people whose peculiar circumstances demand something more than common civility, something expressive of feeling, and a good

good heart. Reverence, for instance, is due to old age. We should bear with its weaknesses, and support it under its infirmities. To treat a load of years with indignity and contempt, as is too often done by young people, is a behaviour so unnatural that we can scarcely find epithets harsh enough for it. You may live to be old; and, when you make the aged the objects of your sport and derision, you set an example of such a treatment as, sooner or later, you may have cause to complain of yourself.

A proper regard should likewise be shewn to merit, of whatever kind it be, and wherever you find it.

it. Those who disregard it because it has not birth, fortune, honours, or power, for its attendants, shew a great deal of pride, little discernment, and that intrinsic worth is of small estimation with them.

You ought also to exercise humanity towards those of lower stations, especially towards such as are in a servile condition. Their labour and services are absolutely necessary ; the busines of life could not go on without them : to use them hardly, therefore, or disdainfully, especially when you know they dare not resent bad usage, is cruel, ungenerous, and an insult upon Providence. You should consider, moreover, that

that a reverse of fortune may sink you to a level with them; and a lucky train of circumstances may set them on a footing with you, or perhaps above you.

But what I would particularly take notice of here is that behaviour which is necessary in families, where the greatest harmony ought to subsist. Domestic peace constitutes a great part of our happiness; and every circumstance that can affect it should be carefully attended to. From the nearness of relation in families, and the daily familiarity they are accustomed to, many people imagine that, at home, they may say, or do, what they please

please; and so give free indulgence to every peculiarity of temper, or resent every fancied disobligation. In most families there will be found some who are haughty, passionate, wilful, discontented, selfish, or given to contradiction. Now, if reason, or natural affection be not able to subdue such weaknesses, they ought, at least, to be restrained by decency, and a due deference for one another's opinions and inclinations. But, when family politeness is laid aside, no wonder if these humours break out into indecencies of behaviour; and sometimes end in settled aversion, or indifference. Hence the rise of family quarrels; and a reason why a great many, who are per-

perfectly agreeable when abroad, live together at home in a cold disagreeable manner; seldom happy, except when they are relieved from the burden of keeping one another company by the appearance of strangers, for whom all their complaisance seems to be reserved. An early habit of mutual complaisance would go a great way to prevent these unnatural jarrings; and might, in time, grow into real liking and esteem. Relations, if they would live happily, and appear respectable, should make it their study to promote peace and concord among themselves; and, by a proper conduct, to reflect honour on one another.

There

There is a general mistake of which I would have you to be aware, as one may insensibly fall into it, and that is Affectation. Mankind are naturally disposed to imitation; and young people, not being judges of propriety, are easily taken with singularities, or what is showy and uncommon; so much, indeed, as frequently to imitate plain absurdities, and imperfections. Their misfortune too often is vanity, and a desire to be taken notice of: hence the rise of so much affectation in both sexes. With regard to yours, in particular, not to mention the endless whims and revolutions in dress, some affect to be witty or quaint; some to be wondrous

wondrous smart ; and some, lest they should appear awkward, put on a high degree of assurance. A careless air is, by many, thought mighty pretty ; many again are precise and formal : one is quite frank, and all yours ; another is stiff, forbidding, and reserved. There are some too, who, without a proper foundation, affect to be very learned, or highly sentimental ; while not a few affect too much the man ; and numbers the fine lady, a being wholly made up of affection.

Now all this is departing from nature. Most of the sex, indeed, seem not to know what are the true

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characteristics that peculiarly belong to them as women, and by which they should be chiefly distinguished. These are sweetness of temper, gentleness of manners, and the highest discretion. A woman may be admired for her beauty, wit, humour, fine shape, graceful air, and the like; but it is the native graces of the mind, accompanied by blushing modesty, and a winning behaviour, *à je ne sais quoi* in all these together, too soft to be expressed, that render her truly amiable, and will always command the notice and esteem of every one who has any sense of delicacy, or the smallest discernment.

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They do not see far, who can be captivated by a load of finery, or a few studied airs. The shining casket does not always contain a jewel; nor is the greatest merit to be found under the richest attire. Nature meant that woman, despising all fantastic aids, should shine bright in the lustre of her own perfections; and when she is studious to set herself off by any thing remote from, or inconsistent with, these, she is just so much out of character, and often ridiculous. Light minds are dazzled with the glare of exterior ornaments: men of sense, and taste, regard chiefly a woman's person and understanding. The artless country maid, in her russet gown, and clean

linen, often has more admirers than  
she who glitters in the circle in dia-  
monds and brocade.

I have frequently wondered that  
the ladies, who are so ambitious of  
distinguishing themselves, some in  
one way, and some in another, do  
not endeavour to form themselves  
upon the plan of nature. By so do-  
ing they would be infinitely more  
agreeable than with all the artful  
embellishments, and affected man-  
ners, of which many of them are  
so fond. Indeed, when the inward  
perfections are wanting, when there  
is no real sense, or delicacy, nothing  
can be expected. The poor things,  
transported with the love of novelty,  
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and always wishing for something new, will be constantly proclaiming their emptiness in every instance of affectation that a whimsical humour, or a vitiated fancy, can suggest. And the frequent alterations of the mode, as changeable as the moon, give them daily occasions of exposing themselves: thanks to the ingenious superintendants of the fashion, who take care that the children of folly shall never be without their gew-gaws, and play-things.

When I see a woman dressed out with a profusion of ornaments, I always think she has set up a rival to herself; something that vies with

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her, and attracts our notice and admiration; which is not at all good female policy. We, in some sort, overlook her person, being struck with the splendor, variety, and disposition of the many things that compose her dress, which add but little to personal charms; and, when these are wanting, form an unfavourable contrast. On the contrary, a plain neat dress, adjusted with a good taste, and worn with a becoming air, shews a woman to great advantage; and does not divert our attention from her person, the principal object; to which dress was intended only as a foil, or heightening, and not to eclipse it. Does it convey any idea of modesty,

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or propriety, to see a girl tricked out in the loose manner of a Flora, or in all the fripperies of a French doll?

A distinction in dress, no doubt, is necessary, in order to keep up a distinction of station, and the respect due to it in its different degrees. Let the great and the rich display their riches and their grandeur in what manner they please: they have a right so to do, provided they do no injury to themselves, or to others, thereby, and preserve the decorum that is suitable to their rank and circumstances. But, when those in lower stations pretend to dress, and live, like people of su-

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perior rank and fortune, they act preposterously; and cannot wonder should they be made the jest of the very persons they so much affect to imitate; who naturally will ask, what pretensions have these people to such things?

This foolish affectation of appearing like our betters has been the ruin of many families, which, from a competency, nay from seeming affluence, have been thereby reduced to a dependent state. Parents can plead no just excuse for indulging their children in this respect. Children are no less inexcusable when they take advantage of their parents indulgence

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to obtain from them whatever they have a mind to. To cure them of that excessive fondness which young people commonly shew for superfluities, and fine things, they should be early taught to despise dress, except so far as necessity and decency require; because, when a passion for it gets possession, it is always uppermost: it never forsakes one, and there is no end of gratifying it. Besides, children would do well to consider, in time, whether or not, in the event of a parent's death, they shall have wherewith to support them in a manner suitable to their birth, their education, and their expectations. But young people seldom think:

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present enjoyment is all their concern; and so they be but as fine, or finer, if possible, than others, they never mind consequences. However, as this foible generally proceeds from thoughtlessness, we are disposed to overlook it; hoping, if parents do not encourage it, which they too often do, that time, and a little experience, will correct it. But when a girl appears to value herself on the fineness, the fashion, or the variety of her clothes, and other implements of dress, and to affect a superiority on that account, she discovers a great deal of silly pride; and gives one a just contempt both of her dress and of her understanding.

It

It is to be regretted that many persons, not destitute of real excellency, are early prevented through the influence of fashion, example, or a faulty education, and, by custom, become so habituated to affection, that they either willingly suffer themselves to be carried down the stream, or, with difficulty, are brought back to a contrary habit. That one had better be out of the world than out of the fashion, is a common saying, and, in some sense, may be true. But, whatever your improvement in any respect may be, till you have got above the power of custom and fashion, you are far from being perfect. A decent conformity to these, however, is prudent, and a

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part of good manners : a fond attachment, or a slavish subjection to, them, is a certain indication of a vain, frivolous mind.

The younger part of the sex should be strongly cautioned against this prevailing error of affectation ; and to you, my dear, I would say, remember you are a woman ; and that, therefore, the greatest propriety and decency will always be expected from you. Affectation is not merely an impropriety : in many instances it is an indecency too, nay sometimes a crime. You should be informed, likewise, that simplicity is the greatest elegance. Every deviation from it, is a deviation from nature,

nature, and consequently ungrateful. A natural, easy, unaffected manner, in every thing, is the true mark of taste, and good breeding; and well-bred people are easily known by it every where.

It may not be amiss here to say somewhat of Talkativeness, an instance of vanity and affectation that is frequently imputed to the female sex. To speak readily and properly on different subjects as they occur, is, no doubt, a desirable thing. But some talk too much, and some too little. To sit mute in company is awkward, and may be owing to bashfulness, or ignorance of the world. Discreet attempts

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to speak, and greater knowledge of the world, will cure this, provided there be no defect of understanding. It is a good rule, it is the safest, at least, in mixed company, to speak little; always taking care that what you say be to the purpose; which will shew that you understand things, and that you think before you speak. Were this rule generally observed, thousands of idle impertinent words and speeches would be prevented. Many, however, are so talkative, that they engross the whole conversation, as if they alone deserved to be heard; when all they say may be no more, perhaps, than small-talk, if not worse. In order to find matter for a great

a great deal of talk, it is scarcely possible to avoid saying things that may be highly imprudent, or offensive. Great talkers are seldom very cautious: besides, they quite tire us with their incessant talking, and oblige those to be silent who could far better entertain us. Much and loud speaking, and a rapid flow of words, are no graces of speech in a woman; they deprive it of its natural Sweetness, and dignity: and are altogether unsuitable to the delicate manner of the sex; which does not admit of noise, vehemence, or a multitude of words.

It would be very fit to remind those who are much given to talking,

ing, that it is a piece of complaisance they owe the company, to allow every one, who chuses it, a share in the conversation. Young people, when they have got a little assurance, are apt to take a larger share in it than becomes them. If you desire to be wiser, or would be reckoned wise, rather hearken to what others say, than say too much yourself; like those prating creatures who fancy they know every thing, and love to hear themselves talk.

However, in speaking, avoid all manner of affectation, such as drawling, simpering, lisping, a tone, refinements of speech, exaggerations, and

and cant words and phrases. But, above all, I beg you would not expose yourself by affecting, like many of your sex, to talk of things of which it is impossible you can be a judge. Accustom yourself to ordinary words and expressions, that are easily understood by every one. Learn to speak correctly; and, in writing, write just as you would speak.

In order to inspire them with a due sense of their own importance, and dispose them to attention, the fair sex ought to remember that they are vested with a certain prerogative, and for a very honourable purpose. Their elegant form,

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as well as delicacy of sentiment and manners, plainly shews that they were intended by nature to be the standard of propriety, or models of decency, and true politeness, to mankind. Were they, in consequence of this, as careful as they should be to correct every impropriety in their own conduct, they would not only appear with more dignity themselves, but would more effectually give laws to the other sex; and, by their example, compel them to a respectful imitation. The power of which the sex are so eminently possessed, if duly exerted, might have a great influence even upon morals; and prevent many of those irregularities among the men,

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which are the cause of much disquiet, offence, and misfortune in the world. Nothing but great depravity, or great insensibility, can resist the force of right manners in a fine woman; and he must be more than savage whom good-humour in the sex cannot overcome. But if women are inattentive, men will be so too.

Curiosity, you know, has been long a matter of accusation against the women; how justly, I do not enquire. It is a good or a bad thing just according to a person's disposition, and the objects about which it is employed. Curiosity that prompts us to encrease useful know-

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ledge, and to improve our minds, or our manners, is innocent and commendable: but a restless curiosity, that inclines one to be constantly prying into every thing that relates to the persons, characters, families, behaviour, and affairs of others, nay into their very comings and goings, is a real vice, and highly to be condemned. Those of such a disposition are perpetually hunting out secrets; and frequently imagine them where there are none. Should they discover any thing like a secret, or but a part of one, they supply what is wanting by conjecture; and so dress up a tale chiefly of their own invention: the consequence of which is either the propagating of a lie, or  
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the disclosing of something which those concerned would wish had been concealed. Thus a foundation is often laid for jealousy, suspicion, and animosity, in families, and among friends and neighbours.

Innumerable are the mischiefs that arise from busy, meddling, inquisitive people. Could they contain themselves little harm would be done; but they are always brimful and running over; and what they know, you may be sure, will soon be known to all the world. In telling their story, it is true, they strictly enjoin you not to say a word of the matter; but, at the same time, publish it as fast as they

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can, that they may have the merit, as they hope, of being the first informers. These secret-mongers imagine that they derive importance from their intelligence, their penetration, and their early informations. In this, however, they deceive themselves, for they are easily found out ; their authority is generally suspected ; and every prudent person is aware of them. Tatlers, tale-bearers, and busy-bodies, are the pests of society.

Simple curiosity, as I shall call it, or a desire to be informed of every thing that occurs, merely to make time pass, though it may have no bad intention, is nevertheless,

less, in many cases, both mean and impertinent ; and idleness is the parent of it. But, when a malevolent censorious temper is joined to it, when it is indulged in order to traduce, and to find out occasions of evil-speaking, the character becomes truly detestable and dangerous. To have a full view of its odiousness, figure to yourself a woman of some fashion, in a genteel company, dealing out scandal with a liberal hand ; and mangling every character she can take hold of, especially among those of her own sex. Not to say any thing of the immorality of such a practice, are not you shocked at its meanness and inconsistency ? Whatever her pretensions may

be to superior station and manners, in this instance she plainly throws off the regard that is due to both, and ranks herself with the vulgar. Thus, contrary to the gentleness of her sex, is she at war with all the world, but upon very unequal terms, having a thousand to one against her; and, as she spares nobody, nobody, it may be presumed, will spare her. Ought she not, then, to check this evil spirit of detraction, for her own sake, if good-nature, and a sense of decency, have no power over her? She should consider, too, that we do not always credit common slanderers for every thing they say. They must have bad hearts who are industrious

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to find out, and love to dwell upon, the faults and failings of others, and to aggravate every piece of misconduct in them.

Female reputation is the most delicate thing in the world : the very breath of scandal, a whisper, a look, a smile, and the like, may leave a stain upon it. Is it not astonishing, then, that women who, in respect of themselves, know well the value of reputation, should, notwithstanding, treat one another so cruelly, in point of character, as they often do, by throwing out the most injurious things, which nothing, perhaps, but their own spleen or envy has given rise to?

Pity

Pity it is that those whom nature has formed with every tender feeling should so far degenerate; and yet take so little pains to correct a habit that renders them so unlike themselves, and so hurtful to such as unfortunately become the objects of their jealousy, and resentment. Happy would it be for the world were people to mind their own affairs more, and those of their neighbours less; the voice of scandal would not be so much heard among us. When you find nothing to amend in your own temper and conduct, you may then, with a better grace, take it upon you to reprehend others. But, instead of openly censuring them, which

which is apt to disoblige, rather testify your disapprobation of what you think amiss in their conduct by a contrary behaviour: this would be the most effectual reproof, and could never offend them.

It may be observed, and with regret, that many well disposed people, by thoughtlessly relating every thing they hear, just to keep up conversation, undesignedly spread reports to the prejudice of others; which common justice, humanity, and a regard to themselves, should determine them to suppress, as improper subjects of conversation. Through such channels most of the idle stories, daily handed about,

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are transmitted to the public. But as, in general, they have no good foundation, and commonly are the offspring of ignorance, or malice, consider them as unworthy of your notice, and that you debase yourself by repeating them.

It is usual among the younger part of the sex, in their epistolary correspondences, to entertain one another with all the occurrences, hearsays, tattle, and surmises, that are circulating under the name of news ; not regarding consequences. This is the most mischievous way of communicating such paltry intelligence ; because it, in some sort, puts it upon record, and spreads it to

to places where otherwise it might never have been known. Should you, in conversation, say an imprudent thing, or give a false information, possibly it might be overlooked, or forgotten, and be no more heard of : but the same committed to writing would be an accusation of yourself under your own hand, and a standing proof of your indiscretion ; which, some time or other, might appear against you, to your no small mortification. In all your letters, therefore, confine yourself, as much as possible, to necessary affairs ; and never take upon you the mean office of relating every vague report, and whatever you know, concerning others ;

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which, though very innocent in your apprehension, may, notwithstanding, materially affect some body; and make one suspect that you want either prudence, or good-nature, or both. No woman of sense and delicacy will ever sink so far beneath herself as to make little things the subjects of her writing; far less will she condescend to make her epistles the vehicles of scandal. A letter made up of common talk, trifling incidents, and private history, is unworthy of a female pen, and argues great poverty of mind. Their fancies must be exceedingly dull who cannot keep up an entertaining correspondence without meddling with persons

sions and things they have no concern in.

A particular sort of meddlers are those who, from a high opinion of their own sagacity, are always, and perhaps under an appearance of friendship, censuring the conduct of others. Do but hear them, and you would imagine that nothing could be done to the purpose without them. In some such manner as this will they accost you : “ Have you heard what has happened in such a family ? — An odd affair to be sure.—I really pity the people.—And what think you they have done ? — Why, so and so.—Amazing ! — Was there ever such ma-

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agement!—Absolutely wrong.—I knew how it would be.—Had they done so and so, things would have been quite otherwise.—It is plain they have had nobody to advise them;” which, by the bye, is a modest hint with regard to themselves. But the question is, could they have acted better, or even so well, in the like circumstances? The reasons of acting are not always known; nay sometimes are of so delicate a nature that it would be highly improper to let them be known; and, without the knowledge of all circumstances, it is presumption to pass a judgment. These very sagacious people should consider that the liberty they take is

is plainly a declaration that they think themselves wiser than their neighbours; while, in good manners, they ought to suppose that people of sense best know their own affairs, and how to act in them.

There are some too who, ever attentive to what concerns their friends and acquaintance; are perpetually informing, advising, or admonishing them with regard to every thing which they apprehend may affect their interest, or their reputation. These good folks mean well, but often are troublesome, and sometimes do hurt; and their officious kindness does not always meet with the reception they expect. It is time

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enough to give your advice when it is asked. In all these various ways do people daily transgress the plain rules of right conduct. It was necessary to point them out very particularly; lest, from inexperience, inadvertency, or the example of others, you should fall into the same errors.

If it be alledged that the sex are of a curious, meddling disposition; that they are given to scandal, or speaking ill of others; and that they have a propensity to reveal a secret; let it be your care, as much as in you lies, to wipe off the aspersion by always acting a part the reverse of these. Never indulge

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yourself in weaknesses, to say no worse, so unbecoming in either sex, and especially in yours, which peculiarly ought to excel in real goodness, just reserve, and a constant habit of prudence. Reckon it below you to meddle in other people's affairs. Detest evil speaking. Is any body possessed of a secret, shew no anxiety, use no endeavours, to come at it; lest, some way or other, you be brought in as the author, or the relater, of what may be said in case of its being discovered, and perhaps suffer for your curiosity. And, should a secret be committed to you, keep it inviolably: to divulge it is rude, unfriendly, and a breach of trust.

History of all kinds, voyages, travels, geography, some parts of philosophy, lives, and the general occurrences in our own and other nations, are a constant source of delightful information. If you apply yourself to the reading and study of these, so as they may not interfere with other necessary things, you will neither have time, nor inclination, to indulge an impertinent curiosity; nor be at a loss for topics of conversation without falling upon your neighbours. However, when I speak of the general occurrences in our own nation, I do not mean what is called politics: these are not a proper subject for women; and the

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lefs you know, or talk of them, so much the better.

Should it really be true that the sex have never been remarkable for keeping a secret, you ought to be very cautious whom you admit into confidence with you; and should unbosom yourself to no person of whose sincere attachment and prudence you are not well assured. Girls, having no distrust, are apt, in the warmth of their affection, to communicate their thoughts unreservedly to one another; and, from an early habit of telling every thing, they become, at length, unable to retain any thing. I do not know but this very circumstance may lay

the foundation of that foible they are so much accused of in riper years, namely, of not being able to keep a secret. It is a vast advantage to acquire betimes a habit of secrecy. Too much openness is simplicity, and exposes one to many inconveniences. You have contracted a hasty friendship, I shall suppose, and think yourself happy in it. Miss Fitch-a-one, you say, is a fine girl, and loves you? It may be so. Beware however: you have neither judgment, nor experience, to make a right choice of a friend, which should be founded on a long acquaintance. If young people have warm hearts, very often they are easily offended too. A small accident may create

create a difference between you and your friend, and soon put an end to your friendship. You must then lie at the mercy of one to whom you have entrusted your most secret thoughts, which perhaps she reveals, and, it may be, with additions not to your advantage. What is the consequence? Your great intimacy is turned into great enmity; and, too late, you see and repent of your mistake; which should teach you more caution for the future.

Such is the history of girlish friendships; indeed of most of the friendships of the world; which commonly are entered into without proper dispositions in the persons, or a

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sufficient knowledge of each other : no wonder, therefore, they are so uncertain, and so short-lived. Would you avoid much trouble and vexation, and be kept free from discord, beware, I say, of forming sudden connexions ; and of imparting your mind too freely to any one who has not a right to know it. Wise people are slow and cautious in contracting acquaintances.

It is one of the greatest misfortunes I know, both to themselves, and to society, that young people, without any settled rules of conduct, are so soon let into the world, to roam about, at a time when more than ordinary attention to their

their behaviour is required. Parents, through fondness, or vanity, are apt to fall into a mistake here, perhaps never to be remedied. Miss, at the boarding-school, looks upon herself as in a state of grievous confinement, and waits, with impatience, the joyful time of release. At length it arrives; and, like a bird escaped from a cage, she enjoys, with wild delight, the liberty she has regained. Her usual companions are those of her own age, as vain, as thoughtless, and as ignorant as herself. Never having been accustomed to think she finds no entertainment in her own mind; but is seen every where flying from place to place, to shew herself, or

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to waste the time she does not know how else to employ. Dress and dissipation are her chief employments; places of public resort, and diversion, her very life and happiness. Flattered, perhaps, if handsome, she forms a notion of her own importance, which makes her forward and assuming; and sets her, in her own opinion, upon a footing with those before whom it would greatly become her to be modest and reserved. Nor is this all: a heedless, dissipated manner of living may throw her into a bad acquaintance, and gradually weaken the regard that is due to female character, which always suffers by improper connexions. Is not such a

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one to be pitied? Is not she in the utmost danger of being lost, through inattention and a foolish indulgence?

It is a gross error to imagine that a child's education is finished when the formal parts of it in a school are barely over. The great business of education is to train the mind, and form the manners; or to fix one in a habit of just thinking, and acting. This only time, and constantly associating with those who are the most distinguished for sense, prudence, and good manners can do. In such company young people will always hear, or see, something that tends to their improvement; and be kept attentive

tive to their behaviour; partly by the instructions they receive, and partly by the examples set before them. But, when they are left to spend their time with one another, as they please, they learn nothing: they contract a habit of idleness; grow impatient of reproof and controul; think themselves very wise; and then commence their own mistresses. She who presumes that she is a woman, and fit to govern herself, while yet a girl in understanding and experience, is likely to fall into many mistakes; and to suffer all the consequences of her presumption and folly.

What

What I have just now been saying naturally leads me to take notice of one thing more, and that is Pleasure. Pleasure is the bane of mankind, and of the present age. I speak here of pleasures that are innocent in themselves, but of pernicious consequence from the abuse of them; that is, pursuing with eagerness, and as a principal business, what was intended for a relaxation at times, and an amusement only. A ball, an assembly, a right play, a concert, a game at cards, are not bad things in their own nature, nay sometimes may do good. Young people, however, should be very cautiously admitted to diversions of this sort; till greater

age

age and experience have fortified them against their bewitching influence, and pointed out the evils that may attend them. Novels, and romances, a few excepted, and song-books, should be withheld from them as poison : they have been the ruin of thousands. The greatest part of English comedy falls under the same condemnation. Even tragedy itself is debased, and becomes dangerous, by the extravagant love-scenes interwoven with it ; which serve only to soften the heart, perhaps already too soft, and to fill the head with romantic notions. Till the stage be thoroughly purged from every thing that can offend our eyes, or our ears, or ex-

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cite any undue emotion, nobody, surely, will pretend to call it a school of morals. Wit can never atone for wickedness, nor the address of the player for the indecency or bad tendency of the play. When a passion for these, and the like diversions, so far prevails that our whole time is devoted to them, to the neglect of necessary and essential duties, then indeed they become truly hurtful, and we become highly culpable.

May it not be a question whether the present method of polite education, and a conformity to modish customs, be the likeliest means of qualifying a woman for a right

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discharge of the higher duties of life, as a wife, a mother, and the mistress of a family, should the marriage-state ever be her lot? And, without a diligent attention to her duty in these respects, what is she? A mere pageant, and kept only for show. Such a degrading idea, methinks, should awaken female pride, and strongly induce the sex to consider what will be expected from them when they are called upon to act their parts in the several relations in which they may be placed. It is in domestic life that a woman has the best opportunity of displaying her virtues and importance; and of rendering herself conspicuous for what is truly good,

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and useful, and praise-worthy. But in a giddy round of pleasure she lives only to herself, and is of little or no consequence in any relation. Nay, by her extravagance, and irregular conduct, she is likely to do infinite mischief: husband, children, fortune, family, and reputation, may fall a sacrifice to her indulgences.

It is a bad presage, and portends no encrease of virtue and happiness, in our times at least, that a relaxation of manners, and an unguarded behaviour, are grown to an alarming height among many of the sex whose rank and situations require them to be patterns of vir-

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ture and decency to others : nor is it to be wondered at. The most effectual security against all those flagrant instances of misconduct in women, so loudly complained of, is, in a great measure, neglected, or despised ; and, till it enter more than it now does into the plan of female education, a reformation can scarcely be expected. According to the present system, dress, and a manner, and other outward accomplishments, are the great objects with the fashionable world, and thought sufficient to render a woman complete. But, though she cannot be reckoned thoroughly accomplished without these, they may, nevertheless, do great harm, except when

when accompanied by other and more substantial attainments. Advantages of person, or of manner, and a passion for dress, naturally inspire vanity, and a desire to be admired; every occasion of gratifying which will be wishfully embraced. This can hardly fail of leading one into places, and company, where the greatest caution may not always be observed; and where liberties may be taken inconsistent with that strictness of manners which constitutes true character in a woman. The consequence is obvious; but where is the remedy? A due sense of religion impressed on the minds of the fair sex, in their early years, would

give them right notions of conduct, lay them under the most powerful restraints; and preserve them from those levities, and indiscretions, into which they have too often been betrayed by the gaiety of their temper, and a contempt of what the world said, or might say of them. A woman is far gone who has set the world at defiance.

However unprincipled, and dissolute in their morals, many may be, there is no one who does not desire to see a daughter, a sister, or any worthy relation, bred up in such sentiments, and in such a behaviour, as, joined to other valuable accomplishments, would make her an ornament to her

sex,

sex, and the delight of all around her. Profligate, indeed, they must be, or highly insensible, who can be indifferent in a matter that so nearly concerns them. Religion is the true basis of a finished education : it gives great dignity to manners : manners again throw a lustre upon religion ; and, when these happily meet, they form a very perfect character ; to which the fair sex should aspire if they would appear to the greatest advantage, and stand high in the esteem of the world.

But to whom are the frequent irregularities in female conduct chiefly to be imputed ? This needs hardly to

be made a question. Children are just what we please to make them ; and by time, and care, and pains, may be moulded into any form. They are entirely passive, and equally susceptible of right as of wrong impressions. With what pleasing expectation, then, should their instruction be undertaken, and attended to in every particular ; that, by a proper culture, they may be trained up to virtue, honour, and true happiness ! The education of a daughter seems naturally to devolve upon the mother ; who, if she be a person of a good understanding, will direct it, not according to a prevailing mode, but in a manner that is most likely to make her child.

child happy, and secure her reputation. But how many parents, mothers shall I say, pursue methods that have a quite opposite tendency! Their ambition is to have their daughters know the world before they know themselves; to give them early a taste for company and diversions, for reigning fashions, and gay things; and to bring them, as fast as they can, into public notice. But who does not, at once, perceive the danger, as well as the impropriety, of such a method? Every day gives a proof of its bad effects. However, let parents remember that they must be answerable for all the misfortunes that may befall their chil-

dren in consequence of a bad, or a neglected, education.

Pleasure is a most seducing thing: it is the idol which all the world worships: therefore be greatly on your guard against it, and stifle a growing inclination to it. It tempts us in a thousand different shapes; and, without daily exercising a resolute self-denial, it will steal upon us by one avenue or other. When the mind is early tainted with the love of pleasure, and that again is strengthened by habit, it will be hard, if not impossible, to recover one in such a state to a sense and relish of what is rational,

tional, serious, and of greatest concern. However happy they may appear, in the full swing of enjoyment, who have made pleasure the chief object of their pursuit, miserable must their condition be when deprived of the means, the opportunities, or the capacity of enjoying it. Upon a fair review they will find little, during the course of a long life, that can yield them any solid ground of comfort, or self-approbation; than which there cannot be a more melancholy reflexion. What comfort, indeed, can arise from the recollection of days, and nights, and years, consumed in a perpetual succession of toilsome and unprofitable amusements;

ments; which, though always eagerly desired, yet could never satisfy? Higher views and employments than these become a being formed for immortality. May you ever be preserved from the baleful contagion of pleasure!

Were I to write in this manner to some people, possibly they might be offended, and think that I am sometimes inclined to be severe. Allowing it, for once, to be so, I shall only plead, in excuse, a passionate desire to see your sex, the most amiable part of the creation, cured of all their foibles and follies, and, if possible, made as perfect as nature designed them to be.

Many

Many other particulars, besides those mentioned, might have been taken notice of; which, on purpose, are omitted; as they will be taught you more properly, and with more advantage, by your own sex. My intention was only to give you a few loose hints with regard to certain points which I thought were of greatest importance, and of which it was proper for me to write you. But to these, I am afraid, the attention of young people is not so early directed, and with so much care, as it ought to be. None of them are new, being well known to those who have ever thought of such matters, or observed what daily passes around them. It might have been

been a long time, however, before you could, of yourself, have come to the knowledge of them. Though I have made them as plain as I could yet they may not all be suited to your comprehension : but, as you grow up, you will come, by degrees, to understand them ; and, some time or other, I may take an opportunity of explaining to you such of them as need to be explained ; and of illustrating others from real characters, and occurrences in life. To save you, in the mean time, the trouble of perusing a number of treatises on these subjects I have brought a good many things into a narrow compass ; which may induce you to give them a frequent read-

reading, in order to fix them in your mind, and render them familiar to you. This I am persuaded you will be disposed to do, not only on account of the things themselves, but as they come from one who has your welfare sincerely at heart, and is, most affectionately

Your, &c.

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